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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 QUITO 001021

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EC](#)

SUBJECT: NEW POLICE CHIEF A US ALLY

Classified By: AMBASSADOR KRISTIE A. KENNEY REASON 1.4 (B&D)

11. (C) Summary: New National Police Chief Jose Antonio Vinueza told the Ambassador his priorities would be to restructure the police force, combat narco-trafficking, and restore the police's reputation. Vinueza vowed to continue to be a strong US ally. He said relations with the military were good, and that they had already closely collaborated on the operation to get former President Gutierrez out of Ecuador. While Vinueza wanted to keep up appearances, it seemed his relationship with the Minister of Government was strained. End Summary.

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Restructuring the Police Force  
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12. (C) In a May 4 meeting, new Chief of Police Jose Antonio Vinueza discussed his priorities with the Ambassador and DCM, which included restructuring the police force, combating narco-trafficking, and restoring the police's reputation and prestige. Vinueza has had a long-time relationship with the US on some of our most sensitive issues, such as anti-narcotics. Vinueza said he had a plan to restructure the police force to make it more efficient. Vinueza also said he would like to promote community policing. Vinueza spoke of using a modern management style, utilizing his whole team, not just concentrating power at the top. Due to the importance of the fight against narco-trafficking, Vinueza said he would be putting his best people in that division. Vinueza said he wanted younger police to feel as if they could have a full career in the police force. The Ambassador emphasized the US wanted to be helpful to the Ecuadorian police; there were several training opportunities the US offered and she suggested Vinueza identify good candidates for such training. The Ambassador thanked him for the security police provide both at the Embassy and the Ambassador's residence; Vinueza vowed to continue providing protection.

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Regaining the Public's Respect  
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13. (C) Vinueza thought that the public had been overly critical of the police for their actions during anti-Gutierrez protests; he would, however, seek to restore the public's confidence in the institution. Vinueza would work on ridding the police force of corruption, using polygraph tests to weed out dishonest officers. Vinueza said he made it clear to Joint Forces Chief Admiral Manuel Zapater that he wanted to restore public respect for the police, but not at the expense of the armed forces. Vinueza said that former Minister of Social Welfare Patricio Acosta was leading the investigation into former Minister of Government Oscar Ayerve's actions during Gutierrez' last days; Vinueza assured Acosta that police officers would be available to testify. (We canceled Acosta's US visa on corruption grounds in 2004. Since, he has played up his meetings with FARC officials and has traveled often to Venezuela. The Acosta connection with the Palacio government troubles us.)

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Good Relations With the Military  
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14. (C) When asked if police-military relations had suffered during the recent political events, Vinueza said relations were good. Vinueza told of having worked previously with Joint Commander Zapater in the northern coastal province of Esmeraldas on joint anti-narcotics patrols. Vinueza said he had a great relationship with Zapater. Vinueza gave the example of their recent coordination on police and military planning for possible May Day march disturbances on May 1, where police and military openly shared information. Vinueza said he and Zapater were once again on "joint patrol" as they had been in Esmeraldas.

15. (C) Vinueza said the police and military are coordinating closely, beginning with the operation to get former President Gutierrez out of the country. On this mission, Vinueza worked closely with his high school friend Air Force Chief General Edmundo Baquero to formulate a detailed plan and execute a precise mission.

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Relations with MinGov Strained  
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16. (C) While Vinueza first said that relations with Minister of Government Mauricio Gandara were excellent, he later gave the impression this was not the case. Vinueza said he was concerned about Gandara's plan to have rotating positions for youth in the Ministry of Government who would be in charge of restructuring the police. Vinueza was also concerned about Gandara's frequent meetings with leftist human rights groups.

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Comment  
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17. (C) Vinueza was thoughtful and clearly will continue to be a US ally. We will continue to collaborate with police on common goals such as national security and combating narco-trafficking. While police relations with the military appear to have good prospects, we foresee some evolving problems between Vinueza and Gandara. End Comment.

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Bio info  
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18. (U) Vinueza has a bachelor's degree in political science, social science, and physical education. He joined the police force in 1971 and has served as director of personnel. Vinueza also served as subdirector of the National Antinarcotics Directorate for the Second District. He has also been president of the Andean Regional Commission on Anti-narcotics Intelligence.  
KENNEY